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THE ASCENSION-MYTH IN THE PYRAMID TEXTS

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THIS paper attempts to explicate one of the principal myths of the ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts: the myth of the ascension of the King. James H. Breasted was the first to present the myth of the ascension as a coherent whole,<sup>1</sup> and his discussion still remains remarkably readable and helpful. The present discussion is, however, undertaken in the light of developments following upon Breasted's work. A re-evaluation of the Pyramid Texts is in order since the completion of de Buck's monumental edition of the Coffin Texts,<sup>2</sup> and new publications by Piankoff and Maystre, Speleers, Piankoff and Jacquet-Gordon, Allen, Hornung, Barguet, Lesko, Mueller, Faulkner,<sup>3</sup> and others have greatly increased the knowledge at our disposal regarding Egyptian religious texts. Certain material pertaining specifically to the Pyramid Texts has of course appeared since 1912. Among the mass of publications, we may cite the editions of Sethe, Speleers, and Jéquier, and also of Hayes;<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> James H. Breasted, *The Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt* (New York, 1912), pp. 104–17; Breasted's later *Dawn of Conscience* (New York, 1933) contained essentially the same material.

<sup>2</sup> Adriaan de Buck, *The Egyptian Coffin Texts*, Oriental Institute Publications, vols. 34, 49, 64, 67, 73, 81, 87 (Chicago, 1935–61).

<sup>3</sup> A. Piankoff and C. Maystre, *Le Livre des Portes*, Mémoires de l'Institut Français du Caire, nos. 74, 75, 90 (Cairo, 1939–62); L. Speleers, *Textes des cercueils du Moyen Empire égyptien* (Brussels, 1947); A. Piankoff, *Mythological Papyri*, ed. N. Rambova, *Egyptian Religious Texts and Representations*, vol. 3, (Princeton, 1957); A. Piankoff, *The Litany of Re*, *Egyptian Religious Texts and Representations*, vol. 4 (Princeton, 1964); A. Piankoff, *The Pyramid of Unas*, *Egyptian Religious Texts and Representations*, vol. 5 (Princeton, 1968); A. Piankoff and H. Jacquet-Gordon, *The Wandering of the Soul*, *Egyptian Religious Texts and Representations*, vol. 6 (Princeton, 1972); T. G. Allen, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, Oriental Institute Publications, vol. 82 (Chicago, 1970); Erik Hornung, *Das Amduat: die*

*Schrift des verborgenen Raumes*, Ägyptologische Abhandlungen, vol. 7 (Wiesbaden, 1963); P. Barguet, *Le Livre des morts des anciens égyptiens*, Littératures Anciennes du Proche-Orient (Paris, 1967); Leonard H. Lesko, "Some Observations on the Composition of the 'Book of Two Ways,'" *JAOS* 91 (1971): 30–43; L. H. Lesko, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of Two Ways*, University of California Near Eastern Studies, no. 17 (California, 1972); D. Mueller, "An Early Egyptian Guide to the Hereafter," *JEA* 58 (1972): 99–125; R. O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts*, vol. 1 (Warminster, 1973).

<sup>4</sup> Kurt Sethe, *Die altägyptischen Pyramidentexte*, 4 vols. (Leipzig, 1908–22); L. Speleers, *Textes des pyramides égyptiennes*, 2 vols. (Brussels, 1923–24); G. Jéquier, *Le Monument funéraire de Pepi II*, 3 vols. (Cairo, 1936–40); G. Jéquier, *Les pyramides des reines Neit et Apouit*, Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte, Fouilles à Saqqarah (Cairo, 1933); G. Jéquier, *La Pyramide d'Oudjebten*, Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte, Fouilles à Saqqarah (Cairo, 1928); G. Jéquier, *La Pyramide d'Aba*, Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte, Fouilles à Saqqarah (Cairo, 1935); W. C. Hayes, *The Texts in the Mastabeh of S'en-wosret-Ankh at Lisht*, Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian Expedition (New York, 1937).

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the translations of Speleers, Mercer, and Faulkner;<sup>5</sup> the indexes of Allen and Crozier-Brelot;<sup>6</sup> the stylistic analyses of Schott, Firthow, and Mercer;<sup>7</sup> and the important studies by Allen, Sethe, Schott, Spiegel, Altenmüller,<sup>8</sup> and others. Apart from taking into account as much of this new knowledge as is possible in my limited space, I differ from Breasted on many points of detail: in arranging the episodes of the myth and in interpreting the nature and structure of the myth.<sup>9</sup>

I intend to discuss the means by which the King was thought to have ascended, the major stages of his ascension, and some related ritual and mythology. Many other myths in the Pyramid Texts touch upon this subject, such as myths of the resurrection,<sup>10</sup> the King's actions in the Hereafter, the solar cycle,<sup>11</sup> and stellar events.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, in reconstructing the details of the ascension-myth, it seems that the task would not be complete until every portion of the corpus has been indexed and discussed. However, I have drawn the line as clearly as I am able, and as cleanly. My desire has been to spark

<sup>5</sup> L. Speleers, *Traduction, index, et vocabulaire des textes des pyramides égyptiennes* (Brussels, 1937); Samuel A. B. Mercer, *The Pyramid Texts in Translation and Commentary*, 4 vols. (New York, 1952); R. O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1969). All of the examples and texts quoted in this paper are taken from or are based upon Faulkner's translation, and anything which seems clear in this paper must be partly attributed to the simplicity and accuracy of his admirable rendition.

<sup>6</sup> T. G. Allen, *Occurrences of Pyramid Texts with Cross Indexes of These and Other Egyptian Mortuary Texts*, Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization, no. 27 (Chicago, 1950); C. Crozier-Brelot, *Textes des pyramides: index des citations*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1972).

<sup>7</sup> Siegfried Schott, *Untersuchungen zur Schriftgeschichte der Pyramidentexte* (Heidelberg, 1926); O. Firthow, *Grundzüge der Stylistik in den altägyptischen Pyramidentexten* (Berlin, 1953); Samuel A. B. Mercer, *Literary Criticism of the Pyramid Texts* (London, 1956).

<sup>8</sup> T. G. Allen, *Horus in the Pyramid Texts* (Chicago, 1916); Kurt Sethe, *Übersetzung und Kommentar zu den altägyptischen Pyramidentexten* (Glückstadt-Hamburg, n.d.); S. Schott, *Bemerkungen zur ägyptischen Baukunst des alten Reiches*, Beiträge zur ägyptischen Bauforschung und Altertumskunde, no. 5 (Cairo, 1950); Joachim Spiegel, "Die religionsgeschichtliche Stellung der Pyramidentexte," *Orientalia* 22 (1953): 129-57; J. Spiegel, "Das Auferstehungsritual der Unas-Pyramide," *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 53 (1955): 339-439; J. Spiegel, *Das Auferstehungsritual der Unas-Pyramide*, Ägyptologische Abhandlungen, vol. 23 (Wiesbaden, 1971); H. Altenmüller, *Die Texte zum Begräbnisritual in den Pyramiden des Alten Reiches*, Ägyptologische Abhandlungen, vol. 24 (Wiesbaden, 1972).

<sup>9</sup> See, for one small example, Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought*, p. 109; compare his ordering of the crossing of the celestial waters and the ascent to the sky with my arrangement of sections IV/V and VIII below.

<sup>10</sup> Life after death in the Pyramid Texts, closely tied with the manifestation of the Osiris-myth(s) in the corpus, is discussed by J. Gwyn Griffiths, *The Origins of Osiris*, Münchner ägyptologische Studien, no. 9 (Berlin, 1966). The journey of the dead—with special reference to the Coffin Texts but applicable

to the Pyramid Texts—is considered by J. Zandee, *Death as an Enemy According to Ancient Egyptian Conceptions*, Studies in the History of Religions: Supplements to "Numen" (Leiden, 1960), pp. 25-31. The large series of Horus-eye texts, connected with the mortuary ritual and with the Osirian elements of the Pyramid Texts, may not be completely separate from the ascension-myth discussed here, as 578-79 and similar texts suggest.

<sup>11</sup> For the cycle of the sun and solar myths, see Piankoff and Rambova, *Mythological Papyri*, pp. 3-65, and Rudolf Anthes, "Mythology in Ancient Egypt," *Mythologies of the Ancient World*, ed. S. N. Kramer (New York, 1961), pp. 45-50.

<sup>12</sup> For the general mythology of this period, see Rudolf Anthes, "Egyptian Theology in the Third Millennium B.C.," *JNES* 18 (1959): 169-212, and Schott in Mercer, *The Pyramid Texts in Translation and Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 106-23. Perhaps the most interesting theological problem with which we must eventually contend in evaluating the Pyramid Texts is that of the *ka* and its relationship to the rest of the body. Some texts perhaps point to a dualistic conception of the *ka* and a life-essence or other entity as the two "parts" of the King (474, 683, 703-4; but cf. 149). The problem is complicated by texts often seen as emphasizing the pluralistic nature of the King's being (837). Faulkner translates *ka* as "life-essence" (and cf. Piankoff's "vital principle," *Wandering of the Soul*, p. 3) or "double," depending upon context, and this is a serviceable approach. We may perhaps connect Sir Alan Gardiner's theory that the *ka* was sometimes identified with the kingly office ("The Baptism of Pharaoh," *JEA* 36 [1950]: 7, n. 2) with the nondemocratic nature of the whole solar Hereafter in the third millennium B.C.; the idea, then, that it is the *ka*, "kingliness" or "royal position," of the King that ascends, rather than some other entity, may be considered as enlightening some obscure texts. It may be pointed out, too, that the monistic/dualistic controversy does not advance our understanding of passages in which the *ka* is not a separate entity or even the essence of the King but is associated with an outside figure (1609, 1623). Readers may feel that I avoid the issue when I do not state who or what in my opinion ascends; however, I prefer only to present my reconstruction of the myth in order to generate some interest in a re-examination of this problem.

more interest among scholars regarding the formulation of the systems of belief manifested in the Pyramid Texts.

## I

## MORTUARY RITUAL

The mortuary ritual is contained in various texts within the general series. The ritual may in many ways be considered self-contained, but it does have some bearing upon the larger mythology of the ascension. The purification and prayers of the funerary ritual supposedly cleansed the deceased in preparation for his entrance into the Hereafter. For instance, the cleansing, drying, and recitation of spells ("Spell for Him who is on the Right Way," "Spell of Him who Ascends," "[Spell for] Him who Travels") by the "Followers of Horus"—most certainly the mortuary priests, attendants, and participants in the funerary rites—were necessary for admittance into the Field of Rushes and the Field of Kenzet (920–21, 1245). These texts perhaps refer to a reperformance of the purification rites in the Hereafter, and possibly the very fact of the King's entrance into the Hereafter and assumption of power was considered a means of ascent-purification (710).

The rejection of an impure state (127, 207) and the acceptance or reception of general purity was a method of attaining immortal status: "I am pure, I am conveyed to the sky thereby" (1423), or "a stairway to the sky is set up for me that I may ascend on it to the sky, as I ascend on the smoke of the great censuring" (365). Perhaps, in the latter text, the censuring-smoke is a metaphor for the efficacy of the purification-rites in the preparation of the soul.<sup>13</sup> The texts emphasize purity because purity was necessary for the King's identification with divinity to come, for the purified soul was equated with the pure gods (829).

In some fashion, the purification of the corpse was transformed into the cleansing of the soul or life-essence. This process was most likely analogous to the awakening of the *ka* in the transmission of the life-essence from body to "soul" at the moment of death. The transformation was, of course, a prerequisite for any existence in the afterworld; indeed, in 1431 the ascent of the soul is said to be "going to the double [*ka*]" (the appearance of the "double" itself initiates the motion toward ascent).

## II

## THE PURE SOUL AND PREPARATION FOR LIFE IN THE HEREAFTER

The body and soul had to be pure before immortality could be obtained, and of course the pyramid had to endure and the mortuary cult had to be continued;<sup>14</sup> but it is also evident that the deceased had certain valid reasons for his desire to enter the afterworld. The Egyptians felt that the deceased must have a wish to be "vindicated" for his actions on earth. Vindication or justification, *m<sup>3c</sup> hrw*, the reception of blessedness after a life guided by good works, apparently worked in two ways: it could be bestowed by the gods or received *after* ascending,<sup>15</sup> but it was also owing to a good man (*imr.f m<sup>3c</sup> hrw.f m*

<sup>13</sup> Cf. 376–79, 2053.

<sup>14</sup> 1649–50, 1652–57, 1660–67; cf. also 2057–58.

<sup>15</sup> For example, 354, 356, 361, 929, 935. See the

comments of Anthes, "The Original Meaning of *M<sup>3c</sup> HRW*," *JNES* 13 (1954): 28–32.

*irtn.f* [316]) and was thus used in arguments for the ascension and recognition of the soul.<sup>16</sup> As the heir of Rē<sup>c</sup><sup>17</sup> or Gēb (483), the King also claimed his rights. The bare fact of being King was also reason enough for ascent; in one text, for instance, the King says that the “two Truths have commanded that the thrones of Gēb shall revert to me [i.e., that he shall reign over the earth], so that I may raise myself to what I have desired [i.e., to immortal existence]” (317). As a monarch who had obeyed the moral and religious laws of Heliopolis and had thus obtained an “Ōnite character” (482–83; cf. 486), the King proclaimed his rights. His purity, his royal status and status as a man of morality, and his rights as heir to the domains of the earth- and sun-gods were sufficient reason for the King to attempt to reach the horizon. Consequently, we possess numerous texts dealing with the preparations for ascent.

According to one text, the King was prepared to be raised by Rē<sup>c</sup> or Atum through the actions of the “messengers of the double.” Thus we read: “The messengers of your double come for you, the messengers of your father come for you, the messengers of Rē<sup>c</sup> come for you, so go after your sun and cleanse yourself . . . may you be beside the god” (136–37; cf. 333). Apparently the visit by the messengers prompts the King to leave the earth (and see 216) and “go after your sun,” “be beside the god.” In most cases, however, it is Nūt who comes for the King to prepare him for his journey. She is responsible for “assembling” his body<sup>18</sup> so that he “may be at the head of those who are at your [i.e., the King’s] feet and give orders to those who follow after you” (829). A slightly different version of this episode also appears; the King appeals to the sky-goddess to “set your hand on me with life and dominion” (1036) so that he may lift himself up to her.<sup>19</sup> Nūt was a symbol of the entire sky,<sup>20</sup> and the Pyramid Texts often equate the King’s arrival in the celestial realms with reaching the body of Nūt. This may not have been the only reason why Nūt should have supported the King, for some texts (208, 823) connect her specifically with Heliopolis, with which all mortuary elements of the myth seem to be intimately associated.

But the King did not necessarily rely upon Nūt preparatory to his ascent. A large group of texts say that he was able to use his *own* powers to *demand* a place in the Hereafter, always successfully, for “you demand that you ascend to the sky and you *shall* ascend [my emphasis]” (149). If the King is prevented from reaching the sky, then certain of the gods’ privileges and powers will be restricted (rescinded?). “If I be hindered on this road, then will Atum be hindered” (492). If the gods do not “speak on the King’s behalf to the great god” (816), the King will curse Gēb (277) and disruption on earth will result. “The borders [of the river] will be joined together, the river-banks will unite, the roads will be impassable to travelers” (279). The doom of the universe will be heralded: “the *hnt*-pelican will prophesy, the *psdt*-pelican will go up, the Great One will arise, the Enneads will speak” (278). The offering-ceremonies of the gods will cease,<sup>21</sup> and many will be denied passage in the divine realms: “he [i.e., any god who hinders the King]

<sup>16</sup> See Anthes’s comments, *ibid.*, pp. 33–38. The King does, of course, eventually become vindicated (as in 935).

<sup>17</sup> Rē<sup>c</sup> greatly desired an heir (886, 2120, 2123; cf. 893), and the King comes as an heir; he also comes as *Wng*, son of Rē<sup>c</sup> (952, and cf. 607).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. 572, 654. The assembling here should not be

confused with the “re-assembling” of 617, 635, 830, and others, which are apparently elements of a different stratum of thought.

<sup>19</sup> If the body decayed (722), it could not reach the Hereafter.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. 616 with Faulkner’s note.

<sup>21</sup> 484, 879–80, 978, 1027, 1322–23.

shall not overleap the path (?) in the company of his brethren the gods; the doors of the Night-bark shall not be opened to him, the doors of the Day-bark shall not be opened to him; he shall not be judged as a citizen; the doors of Her who provides (?) shall not be opened to him" (485). Gēb and Nūt will not be able to perform essential functions (1321), and the actions of other vital celestial forces will be halted.<sup>22</sup>

Such texts are most interesting in the light of other known beliefs. We know, for instance, that in later belief, harming the gods in any way was considered a crime and was listed as such in the "Negative Confession."<sup>23</sup> Yet, primitive societies often believe that a hostile god can be starved into submission, and this is perhaps analogous to threats to withhold the sustenance of the gods if the gods hinder or prevent the King's ascent. But how may such lines be worked into the general theology? We may connect them to others dealing with the King's absolute and often violent powers in the Hereafter (393-414); namely, we may view these earthly demonstrations of power for the purposes of ascent as leading logically to the assumption of divine and absolute power in the heavens.

Earthly powers seem to have been correlated to divine powers. The power that the King assumes in the solar bark is the power manifested in his worldly persona as son-of-the-sun; all powers that he possesses in this case stem directly from his position as divine ward of Rē<sup>c</sup>. But he had another position on earth—supreme mortal—and the power that he possesses as killer of the gods and as one able to threaten the divine host is perhaps its celestial manifestation. A supreme status on earth is expressed in or is extended to supreme status in the Hereafter. We may therefore differentiate between the two types of royal power presented in the theology of the Pyramid Texts: first, the power of kingship-through-Rē<sup>c</sup>, and secondly, the power of absolute rule in the earthly *and* celestial realms. The first is a mythological conception of the King's position in the cosmic structure. The second, however, may be a political fact justified by or equalled in religious doctrine. In contrast to a petitionary attitude, the King's demands are characteristic of this second form of power. The emphasis upon the self-sufficiency and capabilities of the King finds further expression elsewhere in texts which speak of his ability to lift *himself* (537, 1925) or to ascend on special devices completely unaided by other divinities (542-43, 547).

It was mentioned that the King did not need to rely upon Nūt in his preparation for ascent but instead could use his powers as supreme mortal (and potentially supreme god) to reach the Hereafter. It should be added, nevertheless, that the use of the powers of Nūt and the use of the King's own power need not have been mutually exclusive. It is clear that the King was aided by the sky-goddess in "assembling" his uncoordinated parts. After the death of the mortal body, spirit and corpse were apparently left divided of purpose or at least unconnected, but through the application of the maternal power of Nūt, the body was made whole and was given direction in the Hereafter. Nūt may have acted in a minor role in the actual ascension (539-40), but I think that her more significant role was earlier in the "rebirth" of the King, in the inducement of the appearance of the King's life-essence.

<sup>22</sup> 815, 1435-40; see others like 297-300, 506.

<sup>23</sup> See the various versions quoted by E. A. W.

Budge, *The Papyrus of Ani* (London, 1895), pp. 347-53.

## III

## THE DESTINATION OF THE PURE SOUL

The destination of the purified soul according to the mythology of the Pyramid Texts is a matter for debate. Traces of a stellar cult in the corpus lead us to believe that the King's life-essence may eventually become a star, *shd*, but sometimes *nḥh*,<sup>24</sup> and other passages paralleled in later religious tracts inform us that the life-essence assumes a place in the solar bark and/or occupies a throne set up in the Hereafter or in the West (*Imr.t*, which plays a minor role in the Pyramid Texts). However, although considerable mention is made of the *d3t*, Netherworld, which suggests that the Hereafter was under the earth,<sup>25</sup> the destination of the life-essence in the ascension-myth was what most would call the "solar Hereafter." It should be mentioned that the ascent to the solar Hereafter is a *return* journey. The King was born into the divine: in the lineage of monarchy, as issuing from the loins of the god in the act of royal procreation and as Horus son of Isis. In all of these cases the King's origin is clearly divine rather than earthly. In the ascent, the King re-enters the realms of celestial divinity and is given royal authority, just as he entered the world of men and was invested with similar authority. This aspect of the ascension is particularly emphasized in the texts: "the Lake of Rushes is filled, the Winding Waterway is flooded, the Nurse-canal is opened for you; you cross thereon to the horizon, to the place where the gods were born, and you were born there with them" (1704). Again, "the King is bound for the eastern side of the sky, for the King was conceived there and the King was born there" (1960). It will be remembered that the east represented the rising of the solar bark and rebirth after a period of darkness. Thus the King returns to the point where the Egyptian universe is mythically renewed.<sup>26</sup>

## IV

## RITUAL TRANSMISSION AND IDENTIFICATION

The Pyramid Texts deal with many methods of ascent, and they can be divided into two general categories. I shall refer here to two forms of mythic passage: ritual *transmission* and ritual *identification*.

Through ritual transmission, the life-essence of the King was conveyed from the necropolis to the Hereafter by a force which was not per se a personification of any form of the King himself. The King may ascend, for instance, using the sandals of Nūt as an aid (539, 540). Ascent by transmission may be traced directly to the mortuary cult; one text says that the "King has become pure through the Eye of Horus, his ill is removed by the two Kites of Osiris, the King has shed his efflux to the earth in Kūš.<sup>27</sup> It is his sister the Lady of Pe who laments him, for the King is bound for the sky, the King is bound for the sky on the wind, on the wind!" (308-9). This text clearly refers to the

<sup>24</sup> 262-63, 332, 362, 515-16, 537, 538, 698, 748, 819-22, 871, 889, 953, etc.

<sup>25</sup> But cf. 251, 257, where the King is *above* the *d3t*, and 306 (?), 717, where the *d3t* is *above* the earth.

<sup>26</sup> It is possible that the "I have gone and re-

turned" of 316 refers to this aspect of the ascension-as-return, as may 541, but Faulkner rejects Sethe's translation of the latter, in which this theme is more strongly implied than in the modified rendering.

<sup>27</sup> Caused by putrefaction, as it was in 1360?

rites of purification and cleansing in the general preparation of the corpse—and through these rites the life-essence of the King is released or may then ascend to the sky on the wind. Some texts speak of the King ascending on a dust-devil (308, 312), others on a cloud (1774, 1777). The King can also ascend in a “blast of fire” (541) and may use the sunshine as a stairway to climb to the sky (751, 1680). The use of the rays of the sun can also be traced to funerary preparations. Indirectly, the Egyptians saw the sunshine as a link between the funerary edifice and immortal existence and as a symbol of the attainment of immortality through the practice of the funerary cult. If the pyramid-structure is a replica of the Heliopolitan solar symbol *bn.bn*,<sup>28</sup> the sunshine, symbolically the pyramid and symbolically associated with the King’s father Rē<sup>c</sup>, was the means of reaching eternal life itself (cf. 1652). Moret’s description may have been romantic, but there is truth in his observation that “the great triangles formed by the sides of the pyramid seemed to fall from heaven, like the rays of the sun when his face shines through the clouds, sending a ladder of light to the earth.”<sup>29</sup> And, of course, the pyramid and its complex was the center of the mortuary cult. (See, in connection with the sunshine-ascent, 1108.)

In all of these cases, the life-essence is transmitted by a force outside itself. The process was a “ritual” one; since the corpus itself was apparently used in a general funerary ritual, happenings described in the text were believed to occur by virtue of their inclusion. What was written or recited through sympathetic magic became real.

The ritualization applies not only to the process of transmission, but also and alternatively to what is termed “identification” (I juxtapose identification and transmission in order to facilitate classification—in the cycle as it stands they could very well have been used concurrently). The practice of associating one distinct form of being with another is one of the commonest features of Egyptian mythology;<sup>30</sup> whether we explain this historically as syncretism or psychologically as the recitation and practice of rituals of union, renewal, and passage, is a moot point to which I cannot add at this point. Suffice it to say that in many Pyramid Texts typical of Egyptian thought, this manner of thinking is exemplified in commands to the King to ascend *as* or *in the form of* another force or being.<sup>31</sup>

Hence, the King was able to raise himself “in your name of God, and come into being, an Atum to every god” (147). The King *is* Atum; he comes into being—that is, he assumes the place of a force in the Hereafter—*as* Atum. Apparently the transmutation or identification is an absolute one, for the qualities of Atum are taken up by the life-essence to such an extent that the life-essence becomes Atum. The assumption of divinity by the King is perhaps best represented in 1303–15; here the King takes on various attributes of the gods and uses them to ascend. He could also reach the Hereafter as a locust (891), or as the divine Eye of Horus, but generally he assumes the form of a bird and uses the powers of the bird to ascend. We may assume that lines describing the King as “he who flew up” (379) refer to the King’s ability to fly as a bird. Very few texts are as unspecific as this, for we read of him as a heron (891), a *ḥ<sup>c</sup>s*-bird and *it-ḥ<sup>c</sup>w*-bird (heron?; 1225),

<sup>28</sup> J. H. Breasted, *The Development of Religion and Thought*, p. 72.

<sup>29</sup> A. Moret, quoted in I. E. S. Edwards, *The Pyramids of Egypt*, rev. ed. (Harmondsworth, 1964), p. 290.

<sup>30</sup> See the distinctions made between identification and transformation, and a general discussion of the

two, by Walter Federn, “The ‘Transformations’ in the Coffin Texts: A New Approach,” *JNES* 19 (1960): 241–57.

<sup>31</sup> See Federn, *ibid.* (with many further references), and Louis V. Žabkar, “Herodotus and the Egyptian Idea of Immortality,” *JNES* 22 (1963): 57–63.

a goose (2042), a swallow (1216, 1770), and most obviously, of course, a falcon. It is reasonable to suppose that the falcon is both a symbol of kingship and of the god Horus, who made the "first" ascent. The King has "grown wings as a great-breasted falcon, as a hawk seen in the evening traversing the sky" (1048). He "soars as a divine falcon" (2042) and reaches the sky: "I have kissed the sky as a falcon" (891); "the King has alighted as a falcon" (1770). In ascent by identification, emphasis is placed upon the King's ability to change shape and use his newly-acquired powers to reach the sky. Most likely the King becomes a divinity at the moment of transmutation; in effect, ascension in this form represents the King's investiture with the divine.<sup>32</sup>

## V

## OTHER METHODS OF THE PURE SOUL'S ASCENT

In ritual transmission or ritual identification, the life-essence of the King is forwarded by or transmuted to another (sometimes auxiliary) force. Consider some rather interesting texts which deal with other methods of the ascent in which the King's being is not changed. Here, other beings only *aid* the King, who ascends on special devices or in a special event.

Several texts describe the King's ascent in an earthquake: "the sky thunders, the earth quakes, Gēb quivers, the two domains of the god roar, the earth is hacked up, and the offerings are presented before me [i.e., the King]. I ascend to the sky, I cross over the iron . . ." (1120-21). Or again: "Gēb laughs, Nūt shouts for joy before me when I ascend to the sky. The sky thunders for me, the earth quakes for me, the hail-storm is burst apart for me, and I roar as does Seth" (1149-50).<sup>33</sup> We may conceivably connect these texts with the threat/demand series; if Gēb is threatened, the earth is racked with natural disasters (277-79)—including earthquakes?—and the King ascends in the noise and clamor of the great destruction. Alternatively, the great destruction is *made for* him (1150), so that he may ascend in it. The lines "Gēb laughs, Nūt shouts for joy" are of course metaphors for the earthquake and thundering sky, but they also imply a degree of joy and contentment on the part of the earth- and sky-gods which is not consistent with an association with the threat/demand series. Because of the ambiguous nature of these passages, I prefer to interpret them allegorically: the death and passage of the King is a major event in the cycle of the universe and is naturally identified with other great cosmic occurrences.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Gertrud Thausing, *Der Auferstehungsgedanke in ägyptischen religiösen Texten*, Sammlung orientalistischer Arbeiten, vol. 16 (Leipzig, 1943), p. 41, and Griffiths, *Origins of Osiris*, p. 48, take ritual identification to be the most important element in the "method of achieving life in heaven." I find such a view hard to reconcile with the numerous texts speaking of the King lifting himself, of "ritual transmission," of ascent on various devices (ladder, stairway, and so forth). I think, therefore, that it would be a mistake to assume that (ritual) identification is the most important, if not the only, means of achieving immortality. Griffiths's inquiry into the Osiris-myth or the Osirian stratum in the Pyramid Texts perhaps justifies his interpretation, for ritual identification with Osiris is commonly made (62,

134, 167, 308, 364, etc.), but surely the myth of the ascension is as important as the Osirian cycle? And, of course, in the ascension-myth, it would be incorrect to say that ritual identification is the only means or method of achieving life in heaven.

<sup>33</sup> Also, 1771, 1906, 2234, 2238.

<sup>34</sup> Whether these earthquake-texts are related specifically to the funeral ritual is unknown. We do know that the presentation of offerings is commonly mentioned virtually in the same breath as the earthquake itself (1120 and others). I would not go so far as to say that these passages are not elements of the myth per se and are rather *ritual* expressions couched in mythological terms, for in my opinion the allegorical interpretation works best here.



The King may use a ladder, *m3kt* (also *p3kt*, 995) to reach the Hereafter. The texts are unclear about the origins of this ladder, for 1431 states directly that "a ladder is set up for him that he may ascend on it," while 468 implies that a pre-existing ladder must be opened up for the King by the "daughter of Anubis . . . the companion of Thoth, who is at the uprights of the ladder." We read, too, of the King praying for the use of the ladder, which has already been employed by other divinities:

Horus [as King] comes with his power upon him and turns his face to his father Gēb: ["I am your son, I am Horus; you begot me just as you begot the god, the Lord of the Ladder. You have given to him the ladder of the god, you have given to him the ladder of Seth, that he may ascend on it to the sky and escort Rē<sup>c</sup>. Now let the ladder of the god be given to me, let the ladder of Seth be given to me, that I may ascend on it to the sky and escort Rē<sup>c</sup> . . ."] (973–75).

Apparently the ladder of the god (Rē<sup>c</sup>, see 390) has been employed by another god, and now Horus as, or speaking for, the King goes to Gēb and requests the use of the same ladder. Naturally, as a living soul the King *is* Osiris and is justified in making his plea, since the ladder was "given to him [i.e., Osiris]." That the ladder was originally made by Rē<sup>c</sup> and used by Osiris is borne out by several other spells. For instance, in 472 the ladder was knotted together by Rē<sup>c</sup> when Osiris wished to "go to his spirit," and 971 indicates that the ladder was made for Osiris so that Osiris might escort Rē<sup>c</sup> in the Hereafter. The King, then, both as a justified, pure soul (Osiris) and as Horus (son of Osiris and invested with royalty) wishes to use the ladder which has already been mounted by Osiris.

Another group of texts state that the ladder has been or is being formed for the monarch by a collection of lesser divinities. We learn, for example, that the Souls of Pe and the Souls of Nekhen have erected and gilded it (1253) and that the same beings make supports with their arms so that the King may climb up (478–79). In some texts, the gods of the earth and the sky help the souls form the ladder (1473–74). The ladder itself may have been made of rope (472, 2082) or of wood (2080, 2082). The wooden ladder was fashioned by many beings:

Its timbers have been hewn by Šs3; the lashings which are on it have been drawn tight with the sinews of G3swty, Bull of the Sky, the rungs have been fashioned to its sides with leather of Īmy-wt, born of the Cow-goddess; the Supporter-of-the-Great-One has been set under it by Him who lassoed the Great One (2080).

The King then climbs the ladder, and an unusual text describes how he is met by the gods at its head:

A ladder is knotted together by Rē<sup>c</sup> before Osiris, a ladder is knotted together by Horus before his father Osiris when he goes to his spirit, one of them being on this side and one of them being on that side, while I [i.e., the King] am between them.<sup>35</sup>

"Are you a god whose places are pure?"

"I have come forth from a pure place."<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Horus and Rē<sup>c</sup> stand flanking the ladder.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. the questions in *CT* Sp. 629. The question regarding purity put to the monarch is one of several questions asked. All would appear to affect the King's application for entrance (see, notably, 392, 464–67,

471, 472–73, 914–17, 1116–19, 1940; cf. 269, 286, 2029, where those beings hostile to the King are mentioned). *CT* Sp. 404, 605 are examples of the later sophistication and elaboration of these types of text.

"Stand up, O King," says Horus.<sup>37</sup>

"Sit down, O King," says Seth.

"Take his hand," says Rē<sup>c</sup> (472-73).

The gods ask the King whether he is pure, and he answers that he has come from a pure place, that is, from the mortuary workshops, where the rites of embalming and purification were performed.<sup>38</sup> Horus and Seth—true to the legendary conflict between them—ask the King to stand up or on the other hand to sit down, but Rē<sup>c</sup> commands the quarrelers to take the hand of the monarch. We may connect this text with a mortuary spell, 34, which says that "Rē<sup>c</sup> in the sky is gracious to you, and he conciliates the Two Lords for you." Another mortuary spell informs us that the gods are reconciled by a cream (?) or ointment, *zmīn* (26). A series of texts perhaps indicate that the two gods are reconciled, *t(w)t īb*, for they do lift the King: "Horus lifts me up, Seth raises me" (1148).<sup>39</sup>

The Pyramid Texts also deal with other, more obscure means of ascent; they mention, for example, the King ascending by means of the *šdšd* (539, 800), an element of the cult-standard of Wepwawet, which is apparently inhabited or regulated by a Horus-figure (1036), and by the *sfrt-ḥtpt*, associated with Osiris (517). The allusions here are unclear to me at the present time.

## VI

### OTHER BEINGS INVOLVED IN THE ASCENSION

The ascent was accomplished in a number of different ways: the King's life-essence could be transmitted to the sky, or could reach the sky by using the powers of a being ritually identified with itself, or could mount to the sky on a ladder or other device (*šdšd*, *sfrt-ḥtpt*).<sup>40</sup> The prerequisite for ascent in all cases seems to be, clearly, the existence of a life-essence capable of *becoming*, of attaining immortality in the Hereafter, but many divinities and inhabitants of the celestial realms aided this life-essence in its journey.

As has been mentioned, the first beings to have an influence upon the ascent of the King are the Followers of Horus, who bathe, cleanse, and recite prayers for the safe-keeping and success of the celestial traveler (920-23, 1245). These figures are associated with the earthly realm. The importance of the connection or liaison with the realms of mortals should not be dismissed lightly, for souls from earth who have already reached blessedness aid the King in the ladder-ascent. The Souls of Pe, Nekhen, and Ōn are symbolic of what the King will, supposedly, become. The Souls of Ōn assume more general responsibility for the King's ascent (1090, 1495). The importance of the Heliopolitan origin of the King is emphasized elsewhere in the corpus, for the King assumes that since he is an Ōnite he has the right to enter the Beyond (482-83), and note that he is to join the "great company which was born aforetime in Ōn" (1041).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. 1627.

<sup>38</sup> See John A. Wilson, "Funerary Services in the Egyptian Old Kingdom," *JNES* 3 (1944): 202, n. 3 and Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, vol. 1, p. 94, utterance 305, n. 3. For the funerary services, see the summary in Piankoff, *Wandering of the Soul*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. 390, 488, 542. Some of the allusions in 1763-1764 are unknown, but these lines may also refer to

this episode. This episode may belong to a larger cycle concerned with Horus and Seth and their quarrels; see J. Gwyn Griffiths, *The Conflict of Horus and Seth* (Liverpool, 1960), pp. 1-27.

<sup>40</sup> I hesitate to include the earthquake here as a means of ascent, for it may rather symbolize the ascension as a general cosmic event—that is, it may not be a specific method of reaching the Hereafter.

The divine figures who aid the King include all of the major figures of the solar pantheon. Nūt assembles him, and she will take his hand and give him a road to the horizon, "to the place where Rē<sup>c</sup> is" (756). Nūt will not allow him to fall or slip on his journey (1021), for she has given her heavenly benediction: "Nūt places her hand on me just as she did for Osiris on the day when he died" (1090).<sup>41</sup> Gēb, consort of the sky-goddess, renders aid to the King on many stages of the ascent. Generally, Gēb "caused" him to come (1494), that is, he is in a direct manner responsible for the monarch's success; more specifically, he helps the King to reach Nūt (1030), he intercedes on the King's behalf with the gods (477); and once the King has reached the sky, he leads him to the celestial gates (1115). When the king eventually reaches the circle of the gods, Gēb will give to him the royal uraeus and invest him with divine authority (139).<sup>42</sup> The significance of the aid rendered to the King by Nūt and Gēb is immeasurable, for as symbols of all heaven and earth their support is crucial in the ability of the life-essence to reach the Beyond. All gods who are directly named in connection with the ascent do support the King, as well; Isis (379, 1089), Nephthys (379, 1089), Thoth (1089), Wepwawet (1090), Shu (1090), Seth (1493), and many others participate (willingly) in the ascension. Horus protects the King in the King's name of "Horizon from which Rē<sup>c</sup> ascends" (1887), and Rē<sup>c</sup> himself is asked to give his hand to the King (1498), which he does as a demonstration of final acceptance (286). Rē<sup>c</sup> in the form of Atum helps the King (1473), and even the mortuary-god Anubis takes his arm (2178). Other inhabitants of the divine sphere support the King; the Imperishable Stars raise him aloft,<sup>43</sup> and the "bull of Rē<sup>c</sup>" meets and tests the King in his passage.<sup>44</sup>

## VII

## THE CELESTIAL GATE

Upon reaching the sky, the life-essence of the King approaches the celestial gate and/or the celestial river. Since I am unable to determine whether these events occurred together, one after the other, or as alternatives, I shall discuss them arbitrarily as if they were completely separate rather than as if they were elements of a progression.<sup>45</sup>

Only one text directly describes the King's arrival at the gate, 'rrt (also 'rrt nwn [392]; cf. 1740), in the sky: "you have ascended to the portal, having appeared as King and gone on high as Wepwawet; he [i.e., Wepwawet] will give support and will not tire"

<sup>41</sup> Cf. 941, for Nūt's role in the ladder-ascent.

<sup>42</sup> In all but 139, Gēb appears as earth-god and as a patron of cosmic stature for the King. In 139 he appears as the representative of the earth in the divine assembly.

<sup>43</sup> 139, 724, 866, 1726, 2183. R. O. Faulkner, "The King and the Star-Religion in the Pyramid Texts," *JNES* 25 (1966): 153-61, has collected the texts in which the King is associated with the stars or stellar realms; I have cited only a few passages. The stars appear to play a relatively minor role in the ascension-myth. Solar figures are the figures most closely involved with the King, and the ascension is generally associated with the daylight rather than with the nighttime.

<sup>44</sup> 470-71, 914-17; cf. 597-98.

<sup>45</sup> I have the impression that the King reached

either the gate or the river; he did not arrive at one and then proceed to the other. Dieter Mueller, "An Early Egyptian Guide to the Hereafter," *JEA* 58 (1972): 99-125, has published a text which seems to contradict this impression, as do the Coffin Texts and related literature. However, in the later periods the "predilection for scientific systematization" (Mueller, *ibid.*, p. 100) perhaps remedied an earlier situation in which a confusing array of options, choices, and alternatives was presented. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought*, pp. 114-15, apparently considered that the King arrived at the celestial gates after he had crossed the (celestial?) waters; I cannot dispute this view, but do feel that it imposes too rigid a structure upon the myth, admittedly in its older phase in the Pyramid Texts.

(1638). The portal, the "double Ram-gate,"<sup>46</sup> is supposedly bolted<sup>47</sup> and is represented in a later papyrus as resting on the horizon mountains and formed by two doors,<sup>48</sup> surmounted by the symbol for the sky,  $\equiv$ .<sup>49</sup> The gate-keeper, variously known as the "Summoner," *štt* (1157), *Hr.f-ḥ3.f* (?; 1201; usually applied to the celestial Ferryman), and the gatekeeper of a god, is apparently a fearsome creature.<sup>50</sup> It should be remembered that the gate keeps out ordinary mortals;<sup>51</sup> the solar Hereafter is in general non-democratic, as other kinds of texts also serve to show.<sup>52</sup> The Pyramid Texts give us fragments of a dialogue which takes place at the portal; I have taken the liberty of arranging these fragments in a fairly logical order, but naturally they may be regarded as wholly disconnected or as occurring in another order. A reconstructed reading is as follows:

[The King arrives at the gate and asks to be admitted.]

"O Height which is not sharpened,<sup>53</sup> Portal of the Abyss [*Nw*],<sup>54</sup> I have come to you; let this [i.e., the gate] be opened to me."

"Is the King the little one yonder?"

"I am at the head of the Followers of Rē<sup>c</sup>, I am not at the head of the gods who make disturbance."<sup>55</sup> (392).

[A spell describes questioning at the gate.]

O King, they will tell your name from you, but you shall not tell them your name. "Who acts for you?," they will say. "It is my successor who makes for you . . . his tomb (?); his brick is installed (?), you shall say . . ." (1940).

[The King asks to be announced to Horus.]

"Hail to you, doorkeeper of Horus at the gate of Osiris! Tell my name here (?) to Horus, for I have come with hair-spittle for this hair of his, which is ill at [the beginning of] the months, and which is bald at the beginning of the half-months."<sup>56</sup>

"May you heal him with magic . . . who is among the gods, into his pristine state" (520-21).

[The King speaks of a being who would deny him entrance.]

"O Gatekeeper of the sky, act against that messenger of the god who comes out! If he comes out of this western gate of the sky, use (?) for him this southern gate of the sky; if he comes out of this eastern gate of the sky, use (?) for him this northern gate of the sky" (1252).

The King arrives at the gate, by which he is apparently dwarfed ("is the King the little one yonder?"), and declares that he is at the "head of the Followers of Rē<sup>c</sup>." The doorkeeper asks the name of the monarch, but the King is commanded not to answer; the god then inquires who has made the preparations for the King's immortal existence in the tomb, and the King replies that his successor supports him. Apparently if the King

<sup>46</sup> See, for example, 1726.

<sup>47</sup> 1726, 1915; the bolts are *hnn* in 502.

<sup>48</sup> Perhaps the meaning of "double Ram-gate." Cf. also 572 and similar texts, where no title is given to the (set of) doors.

<sup>49</sup> L. Speleers, *Le Papyrus de Nefer Rempet: un livre des morts de la XVIII<sup>e</sup> dynastie aux Musées royaux du Cinquantenaire à Bruxelles* (Brussels, 1917), pl. 13, fig. 27. Other important gate-texts are 659, 727, 796, 799, 907, 1343, 1575, 1720, 1726, 2001, and 2170.

<sup>50</sup> This is implied in the Pyramid Texts; cf. *BD* 127.A, 272.2-6.

<sup>51</sup> 604, 655, 876, 1726, 2246; here the common folk, *rhy.t*, cannot pass through the gates. Staying on earth was to be feared (as witness 658, 2202 [cf.

*CT* Sp. 280, 398]) and is sometimes equated with staying with Osiris (145, 1945) or the "hidden ones of place" (2023). The realms of the unascended dead in the Pyramid Texts may be subterranean, as the use of *šhd* (323) suggests.

<sup>52</sup> 1423; cf. 463, 890. We should, however, take into account Griffiths's illuminating observation (*Origins of Osiris*, pp. 160-62) that the King was a symbol of the people, "a corporate personality which embodied his subjects."

<sup>53</sup> Cf. 603.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. 1583.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. 2000, where the King is commanded to "come in peace."

<sup>56</sup> Cf. 2055-56.

has no one to support the mortuary cult after his own death he will be denied access to the celestial realms. The "death of the soul"—a matter treated in later Osirian mythology—is closely connected with the success of the life-essence at the celestial gateway, and before the soul could perish or be condemned to eternal wanderings, it seems that it had first to attempt to enter. At any rate, the door-keeper does accept the King's reply, for in the next passage the King asks to be announced to Horus (I speculate that to be announced to the god within, the King had first to be recognized by the god without); a new month has arrived, and the monarch comes with healing medicine for Horus's illness. (The sickness of Horus and the King's request to be announced to Horus may not be related—but is the King's medicine a bribe?) The last text in the series is difficult to interpret, but I understand from it that a hostile messenger from Rē<sup>c</sup> will possibly attempt to harm the deceased, or deny him entrance, so the deceased petitions the doorkeeper to participate in a ruse which will prevent this from occurring.<sup>57</sup> I think that it is reasonable to believe that the questions directed to the King by the celestial doorkeeper are simply for the sake of appearances. In general, the King "will not be excluded, and there is nothing through which he can be excluded" (309),<sup>58</sup> for the rights and powers of the King are firmly justified by a cycle rooted in original, mythical time. The King passes up the ladder as Osiris before him had done; the King waits at the gate, while his father Horus and his father/god Rē<sup>c</sup><sup>59</sup> are already within. It is only a matter of procedure before the King will likewise be admitted to the highest circle of the gods, for, of course, the bolts are drawn back and the doors opened (194, 572).

## VIII

## THE CELESTIAL RIVER

Consider now the crossing of the celestial river. Accompanied and protected by Horus throughout his journey, the King is halted at the river as his mentor passes over; "O Horus," says the King, "take me with you . . . do not leave me boatless" (1030).<sup>60</sup> If the King wishes to use the reed-floats of the sky, *zhn*, as a means of passing over the river, he must confirm his divinity for the (watch?) gods:

"O you western gods, eastern gods, southern gods, and northern gods! These four reed floats<sup>61</sup> which you set down for Osiris when he ascended to the sky so that he might ferry over to the firmament with his son Horus so that he [i.e., Osiris] might bring him [i.e., Horus] up and cause him to appear as a great god in the firmament—set them down for me!"

"Are you Horus, son of Osiris? Are you the god, the eldest one, the son of Ḥathōr? Are you the seed of Gēb?"

"Osiris has commanded me to appear as the counterpart of Horus, and these four spirits who are in Ōn have written on the record of the two great gods who are in the firmament" (464–67).

<sup>57</sup> Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, vol. 1, p. 199, utterance 529, n. 2, feels that the doorkeeper is to open another gate so that the messenger will return through it before harming the deceased.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. 313; also "Horus has protected you, and he will not fail to protect you [*nḡd.n. nḡ.f*]" (591; cf. 618, 1797).

<sup>59</sup> Cf. 886–88.

<sup>60</sup> Since Horus has already crossed over the river

with his father in mythical times (465), he can apparently then cross the river at will. Will the King later be able to do the same (1610, cf. 1742)? Passing back and forth over the river may be contrasted with later spells speaking of entering and leaving at the gate: *CT* Sp. 159, *BD* 107, 109.

<sup>61</sup> See G. D. Hornblower, "Reed Floats in Modern Egypt," *JEA* 17 (1931): 53–54.

Presumably the four reed-floats are respectively controlled by the gods of the four quarters of the sky.<sup>62</sup> When Osiris wished to establish his son Horus as a god, and needed to pass over the river, these gods provided him with the floats. Now the King wishes to cross, and the gods investigate his alliance with the Horus-figure: "are you Horus?"; "are you . . . the son of Ḥathōr?"; "are you the seed of Gēb?" The King affirms that he is indeed Horus obeying the strictures of Osiris<sup>63</sup> and that the identification has been recorded in the divine chronicle.<sup>64</sup> Other texts elaborate upon the identification with Horus: "the reed-floats of the sky are set down for Horus so that he may cross to Rē<sup>c</sup> at the horizon . . . the reed-floats of the sky are set down for me, for I am Horus of the Gods [*Hrw ntrw*] and I will cross indeed to Rē<sup>c</sup> at the horizon" (1084–86). Horus had passed over the river in the reed-floats; in the "present time" with which the Pyramid Texts deal, Horus is the King, and his request (as a child) is simply a request to return to the location of the original transition from Horus-the-child (chaperoned by Osiris) to Horus-the-god. "The reed-floats of the sky are set down for this King so that he may cross on them to the horizon, to the place where [the gods] were born, where he was born with them" (1706). The crossing of the river is a return to the original, pure self of the King of mythical time; in the death of the monarch, his original life as a god is re-affirmed.<sup>65</sup>

In (another version of?) the crossing of the river, the King's destination is a dock or landing place "which the gods made, on which the gods carouse on those their days of annual festivals" (1187). In a general sense, of course, the King is bound for the realms of the blessed, commonly termed in these passages the Field of Rushes, *šht ḫrw*, or the Field of Offerings, *šht ḫtpw*, and interestingly the Field of the Beautiful Throne of the Great God, *šht st nfrt nt ntr* 3 (1191). The boat itself is equipped with a cabin and is described as being seven hundred and seventy cubits long (1209). The boat has been employed before, by Horus and by Osiris, but also by the gods in general (384). At any rate, the King arrives at the mooring-place, and we may reconstruct the exchange which took place between him and the Celestial Ferryman, whose commonest titles were *M3.f ḫ3.f*, "he who looks to his rear," and/or *Ḥr.f ḫ3.f*.<sup>66</sup> What follows is my tentative association of the scattered texts:

[The King speaks to the Ferryman.]

"O *Ḥr.f ḫ3.f*, ferry me over to the Field of Rushes."

"Whence have you come?"

"I have come from *3u3rt*, my companion (?) is the serpent which came forth from the god, the uraeus which came forth from Rē<sup>c</sup>. Ferry me over and put me down at the Field of Rushes; these four spirits who are with me are Ḥapy, Duamūtef, Imsety, and Kebhsenuf, two on one side and two on the other . . ." (1091).

<sup>62</sup> Some texts have two boats controlled by the four sons of Horus (as in 1206, and cf. 1228). Contrast these with 1092, where the King is accompanied by the four sons, and 1221, where four totally different spirits appear to be involved.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. 493.

<sup>64</sup> The King does not appear only as Horus, but in all three cases—as Horus, as child of the cow-goddess, and as offspring of the earth-god—he is a child-figure. The mythic significance of the god- or hero-as-child was investigated by C. G. Jung and C. Kerényi, "The

Psychology of the Child Archetype" and "The Primordial Child in Primordial Times," *Essays on a Science of Mythology*, trans. R. F. Hull, 2d ed., rev., Bollingen Series 22 (Princeton, 1973).

<sup>65</sup> The parallelism between the ascent of the King and the ascent of Horus was suggested by 1730—I simply add these further details.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Mueller, "Early Egyptian Guide," pp. 102–4, 107–8. Other names of the Ferryman in the Pyramid Texts occur but infrequently.

[The King asks to have the ferry brought to the bank.]

"O you whose vision is in his face and whose vision is in the back of his head, bring this to me!"

"Which ferry-boat shall be brought to you?"

"Bring me 'It-flies-and-alights' [a metaphor for the entire journey of the life-essence?]" (493-94).

[The King desires the ferryman's oar, *m<sup>c</sup>wh*, to bring the ferry.]<sup>67</sup>

"O you who are in the grasp of the ferryman of the Field of Rushes, bring me this [i.e., the ferry] and ferry me over" (1743).<sup>68</sup>

[The King declares that he is righteous.]

"O you who ferry over the righteous boatless as ferryman of the Field of Rushes, I am deemed righteous in the sky and on earth, I am deemed righteous in this Island of Earth to which I have swum and arrived, which is between the thighs of Nūt." (1188).

[The King says that no one has a complaint against him.]

"There is no one living who makes accusation against me, there is no one dead who makes accusation against me, there is no duck which makes accusation against me, there is no ox which makes accusation against me" (386).<sup>69</sup>

[The Ferryman seems to be reluctant, and the King asks to be announced to Rē<sup>c</sup>, whom he then petitions to be commended to the Ferryman.]

"O Ferryman of the Winding Waterway, tell my name to Rē<sup>c</sup>, announce me to Rē<sup>c</sup> . . ."

"O Rē<sup>c</sup>, commend me to *M3.f h3.f*, Ferryman of the Winding Waterway, so that he may bring me his ferryboat which belongs to the Winding Waterway, in which he ferries the gods to yonder side of the Winding Waterway, to the eastern side of the sky, so that he may ferry me over to yonder side of the Winding Waterway . . ." (597-600).

[The King reminds the Ferryman that since he, the King, has already been recommended to spirits *within* the divine realms he should thus be allowed to cross.]

"Ferry me over to the Field of the Beautiful Throne of the Great God in which he does what has to be done among the blessed ones; he commends them to food-spirits and assigns them to the catch of fowl, and it is I whom he commends to food-spirits and he assigns me to the catch of fowl" (1191-92).<sup>70</sup>

[The King's wishes are fulfilled.]

They [i.e., justified souls] bring to me these four spirits, the elders who are at the head of the wearers of the side-lock [*Hnzktwy*], who stand in the eastern side of the sky and who lean on their staffs, that they may tell my good name to Rē<sup>c</sup> and announce me to *Nḥbw-k3w*,<sup>71</sup> so that my entry may be greeted. The Fields of Rushes are filled, and I ferry over to the eastern side of the horizon, I am ferried over to the eastern side of the sky, and my sister is Sothis,<sup>72</sup> my offspring is the dawn-light [*mswt*]"<sup>73</sup> (339-41).

It is possible that the four spirits in the last passage quoted may be members of that group known as "Imperishable Stars," who are mentioned in 1432 as possessing staffs, *ḏ<sup>c</sup>mw*, used to ferry the King. In 1221-22 the Imperishable Stars seem to inhabit the bank opposite the King, who asks the "four who are at the head of the lock-wearers"<sup>74</sup> to bring the ferryboat from this bank. I suggest that the lock-wearers of 1221 are the spirits of the stars, and by analogy it can be concluded that the four spirits of 339 are also (the same) stars. The King requests to be announced to Rē<sup>c</sup> by these spirits,<sup>75</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Compare the fact that should Horus leave the King boatless, the King would call the sounding-poles, *sm<sup>c</sup>*, to ferry him (1176).

<sup>68</sup> Cf. 602.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. 462.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. 1215.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. 355-56, 360-61. The snake-god helps the

King to the Hereafter (1708) but appears elsewhere as a god to be avoided (229).

<sup>72</sup> The *sb3t nfrt* of 2061?

<sup>73</sup> Cf. masc. *nfr dw3* (1123).

<sup>74</sup> Cf. 339.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. 876.

and although it is perhaps alien to what is known about celestial mythology, it could be assumed that some connection existed between the stellar and solar realms in the ascension-myth in the figures of these star-spirits. We have further indications of this connection in the fact that the King's child and sister/wife (the dawn-light and Sothis of 341) are stellar *and* solar figures.<sup>76</sup>

The celestial crossing was of course symbolic of change and transformation and of the transition from the soul-in-passage to the justified soul. The crossing, *d3it b3i*, and compare *nm3it 3*, was most likely parallel to the crossing of the coffin over the Nile, as some texts (798–800, 1716–17) and other (admittedly doubtful) material suggest.

John A. Wilson made many detailed and interesting comments about the various officaries attending the coffin.<sup>77</sup> He also suggested an elaborate case for *two* celestial crossings parallel to various earthly activities. But unfortunately, as he himself stated, evidence from the Pyramid Texts is scanty. However, some material relating to the nature and status of the “kites” perhaps supports his undoubtedly correct view of the parallelism between earthly and celestial crossings. I take this opportunity to supplement his argument.

In the Old Kingdom, a certain woman designated as the kite, *drt*,<sup>78</sup> was the chief female attendant at the funeral,<sup>79</sup> and in later periods two of these women were usually present. The Pyramid Texts indicate that the later practice may have existed in the earlier period: “the King has become pure through the Eye of Horus, his ill is removed by the two kites of Osiris” (308). The illness removed by the kites is elsewhere specified as a poison: “your poison fangs be in the earth, your ribs be in the hole! Pour out the [poison] while the two kites stand by” (230).

The exact purpose of the kites is unknown, but I speculate that they performed magical motions behind the coffin, motions which symbolically purified the deceased and rid the mummy of any lingering poisons.<sup>80</sup> This clearly connects the goddesses identified as kites with the mortuary ritual so important in preparing the soul for the ascent to the Hereafter.

The kites were also associated with Osiris, and it is likely that one stood for Isis and the other for Nephthys. Again, it is Osiris who ascended, and it is significant that his wife and sister were personified in an earthly enactment (?) or ritual. Their specific relationship to the crossing of the river is mentioned in one text: “O you two kites who are on the wings of Thoth, you two who are on the crown of the head of the Wanderer, bring me this [ferryboat?] and set me on yonder side [of the Winding Waterway?], for I am on an errand for Horus as one who must have free passage [the King presented medicine for Horus at the gate; is a similar action to take place at the river?]” (1254). The kites were in some way responsible or partly responsible for the ferrying of the King.

If the kites performed ritual, magical motions as part of the general mortuary or funerary preparations, it is possible that in the crossing of the Nile the wife and sister of

<sup>76</sup> We could accept the evidence of 357 but only as a variant of 339–41. Cf. also 929 and 935.

<sup>77</sup> Wilson, “Funerary Services,” pp. 203–5.

<sup>78</sup> For the meaning of the word “kite,” see Anthes, “Egyptian Theology,” p. 206, and Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods* (Chicago, 1948), p. 40.

<sup>79</sup> The kites were most likely mourners (see 460). A *smntt*-woman was connected somehow with Isis

and Nephthys (as Isis: 1947, 1997, 2013, 2232; as Nephthys: 1906, 1928) but is mentioned also with no such explicit connection with the goddesses (726). Another figure, the “Mooring-post,” who “removes (any) impediment for you” (1012), appears also as a being involved in the celestial crossing; see 794, 872, 884, 1927, 2232, and cf. 1004.

<sup>80</sup> See 610, 628.



the deceased (ritually or vicariously) aided in the ferrying of the coffin, parallel to the actions of Isis and Nephthys in the sky.<sup>81</sup>

A final relationship between earth and the Hereafter regarding the crossing and the funeral preparations surrounding it may be considered. In a passage of some interest in the Pyramid Texts, the kite is identified with Tait, the goddess of weaving (741). Tait, "in her name of Kite," supposedly "clothes" the King and lifts him to heaven.<sup>82</sup> Tait, the heavenly personification of the earthly relations of the deceased, was a participant in the ascent; we may propose, therefore, that the mortal kites were connected in some way with the linen veil draped over the coffin or with the mummy bandages themselves.

On earth, the passage over the Nile marked the final departure of the deceased from the realms of the living, for the coffin entered the region of the tomb-sites. In solar mythology, the journey toward immortality was nearly complete when the boat touched upon the shores of the Hereafter, just as when the funeral cortege passed over the Nile and touched upon the banks of the necropolis; the last obstacle had been surmounted and the body was soon to be served by the *ka* for all eternity. Sympathetic magic allowed the Egyptians to identify the two crossings, as well as to identify the deceased with Osiris, the King with Horus, the kites with Isis and Nephthys, and so on.

In all of this, it appears that the *river* itself is a symbol or agent of transformation. The river was thus an element of the ritual/mythic passage of the deceased as well as a symbol of social and economic stability (we remember that vivid passage in the *Admonitions* in which social disruption is summed up in the phrase "the river runs blood").

## IX

### RECOGNITION

Once the King had petitioned for entrance at the gate or river and had been accepted, entrance into the Hereafter was granted to him. In the crossing of the Winding Waterway, some sort of a canal or water-lock may have been opened so that the expanse of water could be flooded.<sup>83</sup> This canal is variously called the "Nurse-canal," *Mr mn*<sup>c</sup>, the *M*<sup>c</sup>-canal (1084), and the *B*<sup>c</sup>*n*-canal (1102). One passage describes the final admittance of the King:

"Set the rope aright, cross the Milky Way (?), smite the ball in the meadow of Apis! Oho! Your fields are in fear, you *ʿ3d*-star, before the Pillar of the Stars, for they have seen the Pillar of Kenzet, the Bull of the sky, and the Ox-herd is overwhelmed before him. Ho! Fear and tremble, you violent ones, you who are on the storm-clouds of the sky! He split open the earth by means of what he knew on the day when he wishes to come thence"—so says *Wr-sk3t* who dwells in the Netherworld. Behold, she comes to meet you [i.e., the King], does the Beautiful West, meeting you with her lovely tresses, and she says: "Here comes he whom I have borne,

<sup>81</sup> Other ritual functions of the kite(s) are discussed by S. Schott, *Die Deutung der Geheimnisse des Rituals für die Abwehr des Bösen*, Abhandlungen Mainz, no. 5 (Mainz, 1954), p. 171 and by Griffiths, *Origins of Osiris*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>82</sup> The function of clothes in the ascension-myth is a complex problem. Special clothes that the King

wears are named (415-16, 737, 844-45, etc.), and later texts show that this paraphernalia was intimately related with gaining entrance (*CT* Sp. 470); here, however, we are dealing with the "clothes" of the funerary ritual.

<sup>83</sup> 343, 352, 359, 848, 1704.

whose horn is upstanding, the eye-painted pillar, the Bull of the sky! Your shape is notable; pass in peace, for I have protected you"—so says the Beautiful West to the King (279–84).

The King may have been admitted by the doorkeeper, but the texts suggest that the higher gods within allowed him to enter (604). Some passages indicate that Horus clears the way for him, as in "O King, free course is given to you by Horus, and you flash as the Lone Star in the midst of the sky" (1048), while others say simply that "the doors of the sky are opened for you" without elaboration. But many texts imply that the monarch had still to be recognized and accepted by the sun-god.

We know that at some point the King was announced to Rē<sup>c</sup>. Some passages indicate that the King asked to be announced *before* crossing the river, so that Rē<sup>c</sup> might commend him to the celestial Ferryman (for instance, 597–99). Others show that the King is to be announced after the crossing; thus in 355–56, the King is brought the four wearers of the sidelock, who aided him in the crossing, and who will then tell his name to Rē<sup>c</sup>. The unspecified attendants who appear at points in the texts may likewise announce the King: "indeed, this journey of yours, indeed these journeys of yours are the journeys of Horus in search of his father Osiris. Go you messengers of his! Hurry, you heralds of his! Run, you couriers of his!"<sup>84</sup> Go to Rē<sup>c</sup> and tell Rē<sup>c</sup> that an arm is upraised in the east when he [i.e., the King] has come as a god. Stand up, O King, in the Conclaves of the Horizon, that you may hear the word of Rē<sup>c</sup> as a god, as Horus the Shooter (?) . . ." (1860–63).<sup>85</sup> The King is bound for the "conclaves of the horizon," *irtry*, and he there hears the judgment of the sun-god. The sun-god himself is advised by Sia, a god of reason and knowledge and keeper of the royal records, who announces to Rē<sup>c</sup>: "This is the King who is over the spirits, who unites hearts" (267). After being announced, the King petitions Rē<sup>c</sup> for final acceptance. It is possible that the monarch encountered the god standing at the doors of the sky when they were opened (as in 757), but in general the petition was made from afar, since messengers or intermediaries run from the King to Rē<sup>c</sup>. We possess several versions of the King's petition:

"Be not unaware of me, O God; if you know me, I will know you" (327).

"Hail to you, greatest of the gods. Receive me, for I belong to you, and your heart is glad. As for my corpse, it is rejuvenated" (548).<sup>86</sup>

"See me, O Rē<sup>c</sup>; recognize me, O Rē<sup>c</sup>. I belong to those that know you, so know me" (495; cf. 496–500).

Generally the King has to have accepted the god: "I will not be blind if you put me in darkness, I will not be deaf even though I do not hear your voice" (499), lines which I take to mean that even if the King is deprived of the divine presence he will not succumb to a love less than total. "I will make for you praise on praise, I will make for you adoration on adoration" (500); ". . . I will row you, I will escort you, I will love you with my body, I will love you with my heart" (1442). Rē<sup>c</sup> finally does accept the King: "Rē<sup>c</sup>

<sup>84</sup> The messengers may be the *wꜣwtw itmw.wꜣꜥ* who have aided the King before (491).

<sup>85</sup> Cf. 253, 535–36, 1532, 1539–40, 1991, 2174.

<sup>86</sup> Does Rē<sup>c</sup> rejuvenate (*nḥnw*) the corpse, as he is possibly asked to do (1568)? Another interpretation of this line is that the King has passed the crucial point in crossing the river or entering the gates, and his life-essence has not been turned away to die. The

corpse is then able to assume its proper function; to be "rejuvenated" may mean here, then, that the corpse is able to "live again" in the sense that it becomes a functioning entity, as it was in mortal life. But can this be reconciled with 134, 350, 604, 657, 1385, 1464, 1477, 1812 (and cf. *CT* Sp. 190a–b, 349e, and others), which deny any "death" at all?

finds you on the banks of the sky as a waterway traveler . . . he sets his hand on you at the zenith (?) of the sky" (1169-70).<sup>87</sup>

After the acceptance by Rē, the King is firmly established in the Hereafter and the ascension is complete. The texts, of course, deal with the further actions of the King in the Beyond, but the great journey to the sky itself is finished. There may be other actions which the King has to perform—to eat and drink he must be commended by Osiris to "those who are in charge of the Causeway of Happiness,"<sup>88</sup> he receives the homage of the gods,<sup>89</sup> he is identified with divine forms,<sup>90</sup> he may become a star or stellar god,<sup>91</sup> he assumes the power and place of the justified soul in the Hereafter,<sup>92</sup> he may travel in the Beyond<sup>93</sup>—yet his ascent is complete and perhaps the most significant event in the funerary canon has been fulfilled.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. 1016. The problem of when and where the King and the sun-god meet is unresolved, although suggestions can be advanced. A rather interesting passage indicates that the King enters the horizon at night and then waits until the middle of the day before taking the hand of the god (he hails the god at dawn, however, as 854 shows): "'Go, row to the Field of Offerings and travel to him who is on his *k3t*-plant'—so says *Hnty-mnit.f.* 'You sink into the earth to your thickness, to your middle, to your full span (?), you see Rē in his fetters, you praise Rē in his loosing from fetters by means of the amulet of the Great One which is in its red linen, and the Lord of Peace will give you his hand'" (284-86). The King is buried ("you sink into the earth") and the world is dark or it is night ("you see Rē in his fetters"). But the life-essence enters the full glory of the divine realms and it is day ("you praise Rē

in his loosing from fetters"); the King is given the hand of the sun-god, who accepts the monarch at midday (if the translation is correct), for "he sets his hand on you at the zenith (?) of the sky." Further episodes in the process of recognition—which is treated here only briefly—are enumerated by Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought*, pp. 120-21.

<sup>88</sup> 1199-1200 and cf. 936-37, 1873-74.

<sup>89</sup> As in 541.

<sup>90</sup> As in 268, 282-84, 513-14, 698, etc.

<sup>91</sup> As in 262-63, 332, 363, 515, 1155, 1220, 1288, 1301, 1535, 1926, 2104, 2172-73, and others.

<sup>92</sup> As in 710-13, 809-11, 906-9, 1152-61, 1824, 1988-2006, and many others.

<sup>93</sup> As in 821-22, 1016, 1171-72, 1432-33; cf. *CT* Sp. 62.